

I claim:

1. A method for previewing media products comprising the steps of:  
providing a preview device for previewing predetermined preview clips of a plurality of pre-recorded media products;
- 5 interactively indicating which of said plurality of pre-recorded media products is to be previewed; and  
instantly playing said preview clips of an indicated pre-recorded media product in real time.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said plurality of pre-recorded media products is at least one of music, video, movie, electronic game program, and
- 10 software program.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein said preview device includes an immediately accessible staging memory adapted to at least temporarily store said preview clips to allow instant playing thereof.
- 15 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said preview clips of said plurality of pre-recorded media products are stored in a media product storage device.
5. The method of claim 4, further including the steps of retrieving and pre-loading said preview clips into said staging memory of said previewing device from said media product storage device.
- 20 6. The method of claim 5, wherein said previewing device is at least one of a computer, a set top box, an Internet appliance connected to a communications link, a listening booth, a kiosk, an in-store juke box, and a previewing computer.
7. The method of claim 5, wherein said media product storage device is at least one of a hard drive, a server, a mini-disc, a CD, a DVD, a Laser Disc, and a solid
- 25 state memory device.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein said previewing device is a computer and said staging memory is at least one of RAM, cache memory of a hard drive, and a portion of a hard drive.

9. The method of claim 5, wherein said previewing device includes a display  
5 device having a graphical user interface (GUI) and objects representing said preview clips pre-loaded into said staging memory are displayed on said display device via said GUI.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the step of interactively indicating which of said plurality of pre-recorded media products the user wants to preview includes the  
10 step of moving a graphically embodied cursor of said GUI over a trigger field displayed on said GUI.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of instantly playing said preview clip of an indicated pre-recorded media product occurs upon said cursor entering said trigger field.

12. The method of claim 11, further including the step of instantly terminating  
15 playing of said preview clip of an indicated pre-recorded media product when said cursor leaves said trigger field.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein said cursor is moved by an input device  
20 operated by the user, said input device being at least one of a mouse, a track ball, a touch pad and a touch screen.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein each of said predetermined preview clips are segments representative of contents of one of said plurality of pre-recorded media products.

15. An interactive graphical user interface for allowing a user to preview media  
25 products comprising:

a plurality of trigger fields identifying a plurality of pre-recorded media products, each of said plurality of trigger fields being associated with a preview clip of at least one of said plurality of pre-recorded media products;

wherein upon moving a cursor into one of said plurality of trigger fields, a  
5 preview clip associated therewith is instantly played in real time.

16. The interactive graphical user interface of claim 15, wherein said GUI is further adapted to instantly terminate playing of said preview clip associated with said one of said plurality of trigger fields when said cursor leaves said trigger field.

17. The interactive graphical user interface of claim 15, wherein said cursor is  
10 moved by an input device operated by the user, said input device being at least one of a mouse, a track ball, a touch pad and a touch screen.

18. The interactive graphical user interface of claim 15, wherein said plurality of trigger fields further include at least one textual tag adapted to be launched by a user clicking on said trigger, said at least one textual tag including associated instruction  
15 embedded therein for executing a subroutine program.

19. The interactive graphical user interface of claim 18, wherein said subroutine program launches a streaming playback of a complete media product from a remote server.

20. The interactive graphical user interface of claim 18, wherein said GUI is  
20 provided for access to a remotely located website, and said subroutine program launches download of said pre-recorded media product being previewed into a remotely located computer.

21. The interactive graphical user interface of claim 20, wherein said download of said pre-recorded media product being previewed constitutes purchasing of said  
25 pre-recorded media product.

22. The interactive graphical user interface of claim 18, wherein said GUI is provided for access to a remotely located website, and said subroutine program flags

said pre-recorded media product being previewed for purchase, said website further comprising a “shopping cart” which is at least temporarily assigned to a visitor of said website, said “shopping cart” being adapted to keep track of media products flagged for purchase.

5    23.    The interactive graphical user interface of claim 22, wherein upon purchasing of said pre-recorded media product, said purchased pre-recorded media product is downloaded into a remote computer through said communications link.

24.    The interactive graphical user interface of claim 15, wherein said plurality of  
pre-recorded media products is at least one of music, video, movie, electronic game  
10    program, and software program.

25.    The interactive graphical user interface of claim 15, wherein said preview clip is a segment representative of contents of one of said plurality of pre-recorded media products.